

THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, DECEMBER 27, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' SCARE!

OR, A MISS AS GOOD AS A MILE.

BY HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

DICK TAKES A HAND.

"What is that I see, yonder, Dick?"

"It looks to me like an army on the march, Bob."

"Jove! I believe you are right, Dick."

"I think so; but what army is it? That is the question."

"Yes, that is the question, and an important one for us."

"Indeed, it is. I wonder if it can be General Lincoln's?"

"I don't know. Why should he leave Savannah and come up in this direction?"

"That is a puzzle, Bob."

Two youths of about nineteen years of age were stationed in the top of a large tree which stood on the very top of a high hill in the southern part of South Carolina.

It was in the month of April, 1779.

These two youths were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

They were patriot soldiers, and members of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

The company of "Liberty Boys" had been ordered South by General Washington, for the purpose of joining the patriot army under General Lincoln at Savannah.

The two youths had ridden on ahead, for the purpose of reconnoitring.

They did this often.

Dick Slater was the captain of the company of "Liberty Boys," and Bob was his right-hand man.

Both were noted as spies and scouts, but Dick had the greatest reputation in this respect.

In fact, so much good work had he done as a spy that he had been given the name of "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

The youth continued to watch the body of men to be seen in the distance, and suddenly Bob exclaimed:

"Look, Dick! Isn't that a house on fire?"

Dick looked.

A thick smoke could be seen curling upward, away in the distance, and then a building, which was a mere speck, was seen to be in flames.

The youths looked at each other in a wondering manner.

"The soldiers have set fire to the house, sure!" said Dick.

"There isn't any doubt regarding that," agreed Bob.

"I don't understand it, Bob."

"Nor do I."

"That isn't warfare—burning houses."

"No; it is the work of cowards and brutes!"

"And for that very reason I am inclined to think that the army we see yonder is not the patriot force."

"You don't think our fellows would do anything of that kind, Dick?"

"Our Northern fellows wouldn't; and I should hate to think that the Southern men would. I don't believe they would. I believe that force yonder is that of the enemy."

"You think they are redcoats, eh?"

"I do; and I am going to find out for certain, very soon, too!"

Dick spoke determinedly.

Bob looked surprised.

"How are you going to do it?"

"I am going to go down there and see for myself."

Bob looked worried.

"Say, Dick, you had better wait till they come closer; that will be the easier and simpler way," he said, half-pleadingly.

"That would put the thing off too long, Bob. I must know at once whether or not those are redcoats."

"And if they are?"

"Then we will have some work to do."

"What?"

"Warning the people of the army's advance, and holding the redcoats in check as much as possible."

"Phew!" whistled Bob. "That wouldn't be much of a job, eh, old man?"

There was sarcasm in Bob's tone, and Dick smiled.

"It will be a big job, Bob, but one that we will have to undertake if that army yonder is that of the enemy, for I judge that it has made up its mind to devastate the country. See! Yonder is another house on fire!"

Dick pointed.

Bob looked, and an exclamation escaped him.

"You are right, Dick!"

"Come, Bob!"

Dick began climbing down out of the tree.

Bob followed without a word.

Neither spoke till the ground was reached.

Then Dick said:

"Bob, you will ride back and meet the boys, and come with them to this spot, where you will stop and go into camp. Wait here till I come, which will be some time to-night, I judge."

"And you——"

"I am going to go down yonder and see who those fellows are and what is going on."

Bob knew there was no use arguing with Dick, so he said:

"All right; but you must be careful, old man."

"Of course; I'm always careful."

The youths mounted their horses and then with a "good-by" to each other, rode away, Bob heading toward the north; Dick toward the south.

Dick rode onward at a gallop.

He was anxious to reach the scene of the trouble.

He was confident the army was that of the British, but he wished to make sure of it.

Onward he galloped for nearly an hour.

The country was pretty thickly timbered, and the road wound here and there through the timber, most of the way.

Suddenly Dick rounded a bend in the road and found himself with work to do.

In front of him and just a little to one side of the road stood a good-sized log cabin.

In front of the cabin were half a dozen redcoats.

Beside the cabin, in the act of setting fire to a pile of leaves and brush, was another redcoat.

A little beyond stood a man, woman and girl of perhaps sixteen years.

These were the people who lived in the cabin, Dick judged, and now they were to be forced to stand here and see their home burned to the ground.

There were seven of the redcoats, but Dick did not hesitate.

His blood was boiling, and drawing a pistol in either hand, he set spurs to his horse and rode forward at a gallop.

"Get out of this, you scoundrels!" Dick cried, loudly and sternly, as the redcoats, hearing the hoofbeats, looked around in amazement. "Run, or you are dead men!"

Crack! crack!

CHAPTER II.

THE REDCOATS' RETURN.

One of Dick's shots wounded a redcoat, but not so seriously as to make him unable to run, and the entire seven took to their heels.

They ran as if the Old Nick were after them.

They could not conceive that one man would dare attack seven of them, and thinking there must be quite a force coming, they fled at the top of their speed.

They entered the timber and were out of sight in a jiffy.

Dick leaped off his horse, and running to the pile of leaves and brush which was just beginning to blaze nicely, kicked it and scattered it in every direction, extinguishing the fire.

The man stepped forward, and seizing Dick's hand, shook it heartily.

"Thank yo', young feller!" he said, earnestly; "yo' hev done us er big favor, yo' hev so. Ther house would 'a' burned down ef yo' hedn't come erlong an' skeered ther redcoats out."

Then he looked in the direction Dick had come from.

"Whar is ther res' uv yer men?" he asked.

"There are no others," said Dick; "I am alone."

"Whut! Yo' doin' mean et?"

The man was evidently greatly surprised.

He could not understand how one youth could have the courage to attack seven redcoats.

"Yes, I do mean it," replied Dick; "and now, if you know when you are doing well, you will take your wife and daughter and get away from here in a hurry. Those redcoats may take a notion to return at any moment, and even if they don't the entire British army will be along soon, and then it will be bad for you. They are burning houses all along the course of their march."

The man turned to his wife and daughter.

"D'yo' heer whut ther young feller sez, Marthy?" he remarked. "We've gotter git erway frum heer."

"Yas, Sam, I heerd 'im. But whar'll we go?"

"I guess over ter Brother Bill's."

He turned to Dick.

"My brother lives three miles ter ther west'ard," he explained; "d'yo' think thet'll be fur enuff out uv ther way ter keep us outer ther clutches uv ther redcoats?"

"I think so; and if you are going, you had better go at once. Don't delay any longer than is absolutely necessary."

"Thar's er few things in ther cabin we'd like ter take

"along uv us," said the man; "we'll git them, an' then we'll git erway frum heer in er hurry."

"All right; but hurry up," said Dick. "I'll remain out here and keep watch while you are at work."

Dick proceeded to reload his pistols while waiting.

He kept a close lookout.

He thought it probable that the seven redcoats would return.

At any rate, they might come back to the edge of the timber to investigate, and then if they saw he was alone they would not hesitate to attack him.

He did not fear for himself, but for the man and his wife and daughter.

They were in the cabin two or three minutes, which to Dick seemed more like so many hours.

He stepped to the door and called out:

"Hurry up! The redcoats may come at any moment!"

Just as he spoke the seven redcoats burst out from the edge of the timber and rushed toward the cabin, yelling like fiends.

CHAPTER III.

ONE AGAINST SIX.

Dick's horse whirled, and, with a snort of fear, galloped into the timber at the rear of the cabin.

Dick leaped through the open doorway into the cabin, and closing the door, barred it.

The man and his wife and daughter had heard the yells, and knew what those and Dick's action signified.

The redcoats had returned.

"Is et ther same gang?" asked the man.

"Yes, the same gang," replied Dick.

"Whut'll we do?"

"We'll have to fight them."

"But we won't stan' much chance erg'inst seven uv 'em."

"Oh, I don't know; we have the protection of the cabin walls, you know."

"So hev they."

"Yes; but I think we can give them a very good fight."

There came a loud rapping on the door at this instant.

"Open the door!" called out a threatening voice. "Open, or we will break the door down!"

"We are not going to open the door," replied Dick, "so you will have to go right ahead and break it down, I suppose."

Suddenly Dick noticed that there was a back door in the cabin.

"Perhaps we may be able to escape through that doorway while they are watching the front," he suggested.

"Mebby so," was the doubtful reply.

"We'll try it, anyway; I'll attract their attention here at the front while you open the door and get your wife and daughter out."

Without waiting for a reply, Dick stepped to the door and pounded on it.

"Hello!" he called out. "Hello, out there!"

"Well, what do you want?" came the reply, in a surly voice. "Going to open the door?"

"That is what I wish to speak about," replied Dick; "if I will open the door and give myself up to you, will you go away and let these people alone?"

"I don't see why we should make terms with you," was the reply; "we can break the door down and capture all of you."

"Some of you will get killed doing it, though; don't overlook or forget that fact!" said Dick, in a grim voice.

The redcoats had doubtless overlooked this, for they began holding a council.

Dick could hear the murmur of their voices, and judged from the sound that all the redcoats were at the front of the cabin.

He looked around, and was glad to see that the back door was wide open and that the settler and his wife and daughter had already reached the shelter of the timber, which grew up to within a few yards of the cabin.

Dick remained at his post and listened to the voices.

He wished to give the man and his wife and daughter all the time possible, so that they could get sufficient start to enable them to escape.

Suddenly the murmur of the voices ceased.

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Dick.

"We are going to break down the door!" was the reply.

"Oh, you are?"

"Yes."

"Some of you will get badly hurt!"

"We'll risk it."

Dick heard the sound of rushing feet, and the thought came to him that the redcoats were hastening around the cabin to the timber at the rear, for the purpose of getting a log to use as a battering-ram.

In that case he must be getting out of the cabin, for the redcoats would discover that there was a back door, and that their intended prey was in a fair way to escape.

Dick ran across the floor and leaped out through the doorway.

As he did so four redcoats came running around the corner of the cabin.

When their eyes fell upon Dick they gave utterance to yells of surprise and anger.

They reached for their pistols.

Dick was too quick for them, however.

He had drawn his pistols as he emerged from the cabin.

He held them in his hands when the redcoats came running around the corner of the cabin.

Pausing just an instant he threw his pistols up to a level and fired both at the same instant.

One of the redcoats threw up his arms and fell forward upon his face.

Another gave utterance to a cry of pain and faltered.

Both of Dick's bullets had taken effect.

Then Dick bounded toward the timber.

Crack! crack!

The other two redcoats had fired.

They had not paused to take aim, however, and the redcoats' bullets went wild.

The next instant Dick was in among the trees.

None too quickly, however, for the other three redcoats, hearing the firing, came rushing around the cabin to see what was going on.

Their comrades quickly told them, and they rushed toward the point where Dick had disappeared, only to pause and recoil as two pistol shots came from the edge of the timber.

One of their number fell to the ground, with a hollow groan.

Dick had shot to good effect.

The redcoats were rendered furious now, and the five who were still on their feet rushed forward, with wild yells of rage.

CHAPTER IV.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Dick knew he would not stand much chance against five, so he wisely decided to take refuge in flight.

He believed he would be able to get away from his enemies in the timber.

He was a splendid runner, and was, moreover, an expert in woodcraft.

He was almost as good at this kind of work as were the redmen of the forests.

He turned and bounded away through the forest.

Dick did not wish to get clear away from the redcoats—at least, not immediately.

He wished to give the settler time to get away in safety with his wife and daughter.

The redcoats gave utterance to wild yells when they found that their intended prey had taken to flight.

They ran after Dick at their best speed.

The youth had killed or seriously wounded two of their party, and they were eager to avenge their comrades.

It was a lively chase.

At least the redcoats thought they were giving the fugitive a hard chase.

The truth was that Dick could have run away from them at once had he so desired.

He reasoned, however, that if he were to do this the redcoats would go in pursuit of the man and his wife and daughter, and the youth did not wish this to happen.

He, therefore, ran only fast enough to keep at a safe distance in front.

He kept this up for a mile, at least, and then he decided that he had tolled the redcoats far enough away so that his friends, the settler and his family would be in no danger.

Dick had been careful to lead the chase in almost an opposite direction from that taken by the settler.

Dick at once increased his speed.

He was still fresh and strong, while he was sure his pursuers must be very tired.

This proved to be the case.

They were unable to respond to the increased speed of the fugitive, and were speedily left behind.

Dick was soon clear out of sight of his pursuers.

He then turned almost at right angles, and ran in this direction for a distance of a quarter of a mile.

Then he turned and ran back in the direction of the settler's cabin.

Dick wished to get back there ahead of the redcoats, if possible, and secure his horse, which he doubted not would be found in the vicinity of the cabin.

He ran all the way back, and felt confident that he was quite away ahead of his enemies.

Dick found his horse standing in the timber at a distance of a hundred yards from the cabin.

He mounted and rode onward, up the road, in the direction of what he was now sure was the British army.

Dick rode at a gallop for perhaps half a mile.

Then he slowed down to a walk.

He did not wish to ride right into the lines of the enemy.

Presently he came to a little knoll.

He dismounted, and, tying his horse, climbed a tree.

He looked onward in the direction he had been going.

He saw the army.

It was not more than three-quarters of a mile distant.

Dick could see the scarlet coats worn by the soldiers.

"It is the British, sure enough," he said to himself;

and they are certainly trying themselves to see how much damage they can do to the people of the country,

or yonder are two more houses in flames. I believe the scoundrels are making a clean sweep of it as they go along."

The sight of the burning houses made Dick's blood boil with anger.

"I'd like to know who is in command of that army," he thought; "he must be a scoundrel of the deepest dye."

Dick made up his mind to find out who the commander was.

Dick took another look around him.

The sun was only about an hour high.

The youth reasoned that the British would go into camp soon.

He did not think they would proceed beyond the cabin where he had had his encounter with the redcoats.

"I'll ride back till I am within half a mile of the cabin," thought Dick, "and then I will make a detour through the timber and hunt for a place where I can stay and wait till nightfall. Then I will reconnoitre the British force and find out what it all means.

Dick mounted his horse, and, turning, rode back in the direction from which he had just come.

When he was within half a mile of the cabin he turned aside into the timber and rode slowly along, keeping watch for a place where he could stay comfortably and in safety.

As Dick was riding under a large tree he was suddenly startled by hearing a peculiar scream, and a dark form shot down from above and struck on the horse, just behind Dick.

CHAPTER V.

DICK FINDS TWO FRIENDS.

The horse gave utterance to a snort of pain and terror, and bounded forward.

A glance over his shoulder was sufficient to explain matters to Dick.

A wildcat had leaped down out of the tree, and, missing Dick, had alighted on the horse.

Dick half turned in his saddle and struck the animal a blow in the breast with his fist.

The wildcat was trying to retain its place on the horse,

and could not claw Dick, so he was not in any immediate danger.

The blow was all that was needed and the animal fell to the ground.

Instantly Dick brought his horse to a stop, and whipping out a pistol, took quick aim and fired.

His aim was true.

The bullet struck the wildcat in the left eye and the animal gave utterance to a shriek and fell over upon the ground, dead.

The bullet had penetrated the brain.

Dick sat there, pistol in hand, and looked down upon the dead animal, speculatively.

"That was a pretty good shot," he murmured; "that was not exactly a bull's-eye, but it was a cat's-eye, and in this case it was what was needed."

The horse, pawing and snorting, stood with head turned and looked at the dead wildcat.

The horse had suffered somewhat from the sharp claws of the animal, but the scratches were not serious.

"I wonder if the noise of the pistol shot will draw any of the redcoats to the spot?" mused Dick. "Well, I had better get away from here, at any rate, and not take any chances."

Dick replaced the pistol in his belt and rode onward, through the timber.

He continued in this direction a distance of nearly half a mile, and then he suddenly came upon a little cabin standing on the bank of a small stream.

Dick was almost upon the cabin before he saw it.

Seated on a bench in front of the cabin was a roughly dressed man, evidently a hunter and trapper.

He was busily engaged in cleaning a long, dangerous-looking rifle.

He did not even look up as Dick came to a stop in front of him.

"How are you, sir?" greeted Dick.

The man glanced up and nodded.

"Howdy!" he replied.

He kept right on at the work of cleaning the rifle.

He seemed to have no fear that Dick might be an enemy.

Dick hardly knew what to make of the man.

The youth was a good judge of faces, however, and he felt that the man was one who could be trusted.

Dick watched the hunter work for a few moments and then not to be outdone, in industry, he drew his pistol—the one he had fired in putting the wildcat out of the way—and began reloading it.

The hunter glanced up, saw what Dick was doing, and grinned.

"Yo' kin shoot er bit with thet thar weepin', sonny," he remarked; "yo' fixed thet thar wildeat in purty good style, back yonder, erwhile ergo."

Dick started.

"How did you know anything about the wildeat?" he asked.

"I was thar—er cluss thar."

"You were?"

"Yas; an' I wuz jes' er goin' ter put er bullet through thet varmint w'en yo' lets 'im hev et with thet pistol."

"Why didn't you make your presence known?"

"Waal, yo' see, er feller hain't wise ter push 'imself forred too much, yo' know. I thort I'd wait an' see ef yo' wanted ter make my 'quaintance."

Dick smiled.

"I didn't suppose I would find any one in this country who would stand on ceremony in that fashion," he said.

The man grinned.

"Waal, Dan Wilkins—thet's me—never did berleeve much in pushin' himse'f forred," he said; "I'm glad ter know yo', though, young feller, fur yo' he'ped Sam Harper an' his folks out uv er bad difficulty, over yender, an' giv' er couple uv redcoats woonds—an' I like Sam and his folks, an' I don't like thet redcoats."

Dick's face lighted up.

"I am glad to hear you say that!" he exclaimed, as he finished loading his pistol, and stuck it in his belt; "I am glad to know that you are a friend."

"Oh, I'm er frien', yo' kin be shore uv thet!"

Dick leaped to the ground.

"Then, if you are a friend, I am going to ask you to grant me a favor."

"Whut is et?"

"I wish you to let me stay here with you till after nightfall, and perhaps all night."

"Yo' kin stay. I'll be glad ter hev yo'."

"Thank you."

Dan Wilkins rose, placed his rifle carefully against the side of the cabin, and, stepping forward, took the horse's halter strap in his hand.

"I hev er leetle shack uv er stable down heer on thet bank uv thet stream," he said; "I'll put yo' hoss erway an' giv' 'im er bite ter eet."

"I'll go with you."

Dan first led the horse down to the edge of the stream and let the animal drink, and then led him into the shed and tied him and gave him some corn.

Then both men returned to the cabin.

Just as they reached it the sound of a crashing in the underbrush was heard.

Dan seized his rifle and Dick drew a pistol, while both waited and watched, eagerly.

The next instant a boy of seventeen years burst out from among the trees and stood before them.

"Hello, Ike! Whut's ther trubble?" exclaimed Dan, who evidently recognized the boy.

"Oh, Dan, the redcoats have burned our house and drove off all the stock, an'—an'——"

The boy was almost exhausted, and paused to get his breath.

"An' they took dad with 'em, er prisoner!"

"Took yo' dad with 'em?"

"Yes."

"Whut fur?"

"W'y, dad didn't like ter hev thet redcoats burn thet house an' take all thet stock, an' because he objected er made 'em mad, an' they said he wuz a rebel, an' took 'im erlong with 'em, a prisoner."

"Oh, thet's et, hey?"

"Yes."

"Waal, thet's too bad. An' whur is yo' ma an' Gerty?"

"They hev gone over ter Uncle Lem's."

"Thet is good. Thet wuz thet bes' thing ter do."

"But Uncle Lem is not at home, an' I come heer ter see ef yo' c'u'd do ennythin' ter he'p dad."

The boy was eager and anxious.

Dan Wilkins looked grave.

"Waal," he said, slowly, "I don't see ez I kin do much, but——"

"You can count on me to help you in anything which you wish to undertake," said Dick, quietly.

The boy eyed Dick with interest.

Dan did not seem to be much impressed when Dick said he could count on him to aid in anything which he (Dan) wished to undertake.

He continued to ponder, but presently looked up.

"By thet way, young feller, yo' hev'n't tole me who yo' air, yit, hev yo'?" he remarked.

Dick shook his head.

"I don't believe I have," he replied; "and when I first arrived here I don't think I should have told you if you had asked; but now that I know you are a friend, and a friend to the great cause of Liberty, I do not mind telling you. My name is Slater—Dick Slater."

Dan gave a start and uttered an exclamation of amazement, while even the boy stared at Dick with eager interest.

"Whut! not Dick Slater, the great scout an' spy, an' capt'in uv ther 'Liberty Boys'?" almost gasped Dan.

"I am Dick Slater, the patriot," replied Dick, quietly; "and I have done something in the way of scout and spy work. Indeed, that is why I am here now. And I am the captain of the 'Liberty Boys.'"

Dan strode forward and extended his hand.

"Put et thar!" he exclaimed. "I am proud ter know yo', Dick Slater! Jicketer-whiz! W'y didn't yo' say who yo' wuz afore?"

"I thought there was no hurry about it."

The boy stepped forward and extended his hand.

"Will yo' shake han's with me?" he asked, somewhat timidly.

"Will I?" smiled Dick. "Well, I rather think I will; and glad to do so."

The boy flushed with pleasure.

"Say," said Dan, "now thet I know who yo' air, I guess we will be able ter do somethin' fur Ike's dad, arter all."

"Perhaps so," agreed Dick. "We will try, at any rate."

"Good! We will, thet!" and then Dan turned toward the cabin.

"Come in," he invited, throwing open the door and entering; "et's erbout supper-time, an' arter we hev hed somethin' ter eet we'll try an' think up some plan fur gittin' Ike's dad out uv ther clutches uv ther redcoats."

The three entered the cabin, and Dan went to work getting supper.

He had some venison, which he cooked in splendid style, and this, with some cornbread, made a meal fit for a king.

The three were hungry, and ate heartily.

They were just through eating when the door was opened suddenly and unceremoniously, and six redcoats filed into the cabin!

CHAPTER VI.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

"Hello, heer! Whut does this mean?" exclaimed Dan, in amazement. "Who air yo' fellers, ennyway?"

"We are soldiers of the king," was the reply; "and who are you?"

"Who air we? W'y, we air nobuddy in purtickler—jes' hunters an' trappers, thet's all."

"Oh, that is what you are, eh?"

"Yas."

"Humph! What are you, rebel or loyalist?"

"Who, us?"

"Yes, you."

"Oh, we're loyalists, we air."

"Loyalists, eh?"

"Yas."

"All three of you?"

"Oh, yas; all three uv us."

"Well, that's lucky for you!"

"I s'pose so."

"Right; and now, that meat smells uncommonly nice. What kind of meat is it?"

"Venison."

"Venison, eh?"

"Yas."

"Got plenty of it?"

"Oh, yas."

"Then cook some for us."

This was a command.

There was no mistaking this.

Dan hesitated for just an instant, and Dick saw a peculiar flash in the man's eyes, but he evidently thought it wise to not get into a difficulty, so he said:

"All right; I'll cook yo' some meat," and went to work.

The redcoats seated themselves and made themselves quite at home, though it was evident that they kept a close watch on Dan and the two youths.

Dick was sure he caught one of the redcoats looking at him rather closely, once or twice, and a faint feeling of uneasiness came over him.

"I wonder if the fellow has ever seen me before, and is trying to recall the circumstances?" he thought. "In that case I had better be on my guard, for if he should remember, he may remember that I was doing spy work for the patriot army and then there would be trouble."

Dick took occasion to move, soon afterward, and he was careful to get his face more in the gloom.

He glanced at the redcoat soon afterward and thought he detected a peculiar, half-sarcastic smile on the fellow's face.

"I am afraid I didn't move soon enough," Dick thought. "Well, I will have to be ready for trouble, and if it comes, we three may be able to hold our own with the six redcoats."

When Dan had finished cooking the meat, he placed it on the table and invited the redcoats to sit up and partake of the food.

The redcoats obeyed with alacrity, for they were evidently anxious to try their teeth on the venison.

They ate heartily, but Dick did not fail to note that the redcoat whom he suspected of knowing him kept his eyes on him. Dick could not make a move without the redcoat in question knowing it.

"I'm afraid he knows me," thought Dick; "well, let it be so. It can't be helped."

The redcoats bragged the venison up wonderfully as they ate.

They had never eaten any before, and it was a revelation to them.

"This is the best meat I ever ate!" declared one. "Jove! I believe I should enjoy living in the American wilderness a year or two, and subsisting on venison and cornbread."

"Et's ther bes' meat in ther worl'," said Dan.

"I believe you."

And the redcoats ate as if they thought so.

The great slices of venison disappeared as if by magic.

Dick listened to the conversation of the three, in the hope that he might learn something that would be of benefit to him.

Once one of the six spoke of "General Prescott," and was going on to talk about army affairs, but the redcoat whom Dick suspected leaned over and whispered something in his comrade's ear, and the fellow broke off suddenly and did not finish his speech.

Dick caught the fellow watching him, furtively, after that, and he was confirmed in his belief that the redcoat had recognized him.

"Oh, well, it can't be helped," he thought; "forewarned is forearmed, and I will be ready for them."

Pretty soon Dick saw the second redcoat say something in a whisper to a third comrade, and this man began paying close attention to Dick.

"It is going the rounds," thought Dick; "they will all know who I am, presently."

This was really the case, and soon all the redcoats had taken a furtive survey of Dick.

"There is bound to be trouble as soon as they have done eating," said Dick to himself; "they will try to make me a prisoner, as they no doubt know that there is a reward offered for my capture."

Dick would have liked to have warned Dan of what was on the tapis, but he got no opportunity.

Dick thought of making a dash for the door, but Dan and Ike were both seated between him and the door, and he was afraid that the redcoats, in firing at him, might kill or seriously wound one or both of his friends.

"No, I guess I will wait till they bring on the difficulty," thought the youth, "then Dan and Ike will know

what is coming, and have a chance to keep out of harm's way."

At last the redcoats were through eating.

They seemed in no hurry to leave the table.

Dick understood the matter.

The men were trying to decide upon some course of action.

They exchanged a few words in whispers, and then suddenly they leaped to their feet and turned so as to face Dick.

"You are our prisoner, Dick Slater!" cried the man who had recognized the youth, and the six reached for their pistols.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK GETS AWAY.

But Dick was quicker than they.

He had expected their action and had slyly placed his hands on the butts of his pistols.

The instant the six leaped to their feet, and the one commenced speaking, Dick whipped out his pistols and cocked them.

Nor did he delay an instant in firing.

Crack! crack! the pistol shots rang out.

The reports sounded almost deafening in the cabin.

Each bullet found lodgment in the body of a redcoat.

Two of the soldiers gave utterance to cries of pain.

This disconcerted their comrades to some extent.

It gave Dick the chance he desired.

He bounded toward the door.

Dan and Ike leaped out of the way.

Dick reached the door and jerked it open.

He bounded through the doorway, out into the darkness—for night had come—just as the four redcoats fired.

One or two of the bullets came perilously near, but did not hit the youth.

"A miss is as good as a mile," he said to himself, and then he bounded into the timber and disappeared from sight, just as the four unwounded redcoats came rushing out of the cabin.

Dick did not have any fears now regarding his ability to escape.

He did not think it possible that the redcoats could overtake him, even in daytime, when they could see him; but now, at night, he would be able to dodge them without difficulty.

It was really folly for the redcoats to try to catch Dick. They did not realize this at first; in their anger on account of his escape and their desire to be avenged for the wounding of their comrades, they did not think of anything save their desire to overtake the "rebel" spy. But when they had gone half a mile or so through the timber, they became cooler and realized that it would be impossible to overtake the fugitive.

They paused and turned back.

When they reached the cabin and found that their comrades, while seriously wounded, were not in any danger of dying, they felt somewhat better; but they were evidently suspicious of Dan and Ike.

They questioned Dan, closely, but he succeeded in making the redcoats believe that he had had no knowledge of the identity of Dick Slater.

After working with their wounded comrades for half an hour, the redcoats made up their minds to return to the British encampment.

One of the wounded men said he could walk, but the other would have to be carried.

A rude litter was improvised and the wounded man was placed upon it.

Then the party set out.

Their progress was slow, as it was a difficult matter to carry the litter through the timber in the darkness, and it took them more than an hour to go about a mile—which was the distance from the cabin to the British encampment.

Their advent, carrying their wounded comrade, caused some excitement, and when they told that the man had been wounded by Dick Slater, the "rebel" spy, the excitement was still greater.

There was scarcely a man in the British army who had not heard of Dick Slater.

They had heard many stories regarding the wonderful doings of the youth, and had doubted the truth of the stories.

Now, however, when they were told that the youth had wounded two of their comrades and made his escape from the party of six, they began to believe that there might be truth in many of the stories they had heard.

"Jove! I'd like to see that fellow, Slater!" exclaimed a redcoat on the outskirts of the crowd which surrounded the six who had just entered the camp.

He little thought that he was speaking into the ear of the very youth he had just expressed a desire to see, but such was the case.

Dick, as soon as the four redcoats gave up the chase, and turned back toward the cabin, also turned back.

He remained hidden near the cabin till he saw the party of redcoats emerge and start away.

He knew they were bound for the British encampment, and he reasoned that the excitement following their appearance in the camp would make it safe for him to enter the encampment in case he could secure a British uniform.

With Dick, nothing was impossible.

He made up his mind to secure a uniform.

He knew the progress of the redcoats with the litter would be slow, and he would have ample time for his purpose.

Dick made a detour and got around the party.

He hastened on ahead.

He did not know exactly where the British encampment was, of course, but he was sure he would have no trouble in finding it quickly.

His idea was that the encampment would be near the cabin of Sam Harper, where he had had his encounter with the party of redcoats that afternoon.

So he headed in that direction.

His ideas turned out to be correct.

The British had encamped near the cabin.

Dick had no doubt that the commander of the British force was quartered within the cabin.

Dick approached cautiously.

Finally he succeeded in locating one of the sentinels.

This was what Dick wished.

His purpose was to capture a sentinel, remove the fellow's uniform, don it, and then slip into the encampment.

By being there when the party of six arrived he would be able to hear something that would interest him, he thought.

But this would be a difficult and dangerous undertaking.

To attempt to capture a sentinel within easy hailing distance of the entire British force was something not many would have been willing to undertake.

But Dick was a daring youth.

No matter how difficult a feat it might appear to be, he would attempt it, if it was necessary to do so, or if it seemed that the benefits to be secured were sufficient to compensate one for the dangers encountered.

In this instance Dick thought the game well worth the candle.

As soon as he had located the sentinel, he began creeping up on the fellow.

Dick was an expert in woodcraft.

Few Indian braves could excel him in this respect.

He could steal through the forest as silently as a shadow.

He knew how to walk so as to not make the leaves rustle.

He had learned the secret of avoiding treading upon and breaking twigs, the snapping of which would alarm any one on guard instantly.

Closer and closer Dick crept.

Every once in a while he would pause and wait, with all the patience of an Indian stalking game.

Then he would steal forward once more, one yard, perhaps two—but never more.

A brief rest and then forward he would go again.

It was slow work.

It was nerve-trying work.

But Dick's out-door life, the hardships and exposure, everything, in fact, conduced to nerves of steel, and the youth was not worried on this score.

Dick was worried somewhat for fear he might not be able to make a success of his undertaking, but so far as the strain on his nerves was concerned, this did not bother him.

Closer and closer Dick crept.

He was within ten feet of the sentinel.

He paused and stood behind a tree and waited.

The sentinel was standing, looking toward the encampment.

Dick felt that now was his time to make the attack.

The sentinel might at any moment turn and face him, and this would make his task much more difficult.

Dick fully realized this, and made up his mind to hasten matters.

He stole forward, one, two yards.

Only a few feet remained, and Dick felt that he was close enough to enable him to make his attack.

The camp-fires were burning brightly, out in the open near the cabin, but there was not sufficient light within the edge of the timber where Dick and the sentinel were to make it hazardous for the youth in so far as being seen was concerned; the trouble would be in keeping the sentinel from giving the alarm when attacked.

There were two ways to prevent this.

One was to deal the man a sufficiently hard blow over the head to render him instantly unconscious; the other was to get such a tight grip on the fellow's throat that he could not cry out.

Dick favored this plan.

He had put it into effect with success a score of times since becoming engaged in the work of a spy, and he had full faith that if he succeeded in getting a good grip on the sentinel's throat the fellow would not cry out.

Dick had an iron grip, and had proven this fact in many an instance.

On the other hand, if he were to try to knock the sentinel senseless by a single blow, he might fail.

He could not see as well as he ought, if he were to deal a successful blow.

If he struck the man only a glancing blow the fellow would surely alarm the camp, and then Dick's plan would go up in smoke.

No, he would trust to the plan of getting the sentinel by the throat and choking him into insensibility.

It would take longer, but it was safer and surer.

Dick measured the distance carefully, and then leaped forward.

He seized the sentinel by the throat with both hands, the steel-like fingers closing up and compressing the man's throat with almost the power of a vise.

A faint, gurgling groan escaped the lips of the sentinel.

It was not loud enough to be heard by the men around the camp-fires, however.

The sentinel struggled as fiercely as he could.

But he could not do much.

He was in the hands of one who was unusually strong, and who had had a wonderful amount of experience in this kind of work.

The struggles of the sentinel became fainter and fainter.

In one minute's time they ceased altogether.

The man sank back, limp and apparently lifeless.

Dick still maintained his grip, however.

The redcoat might be shamming.

If so, and Dick was to let go of the fellow's throat, he would yell and arouse the camp.

This, of course, Dick would not have had happen for anything.

He had taken too much trouble to have it all spoiled at the last moment.

He soon saw, however, that the man was not playing possum.

The sentinel was really insensible.

Dick, as soon as he was sure of this, eased the man to the ground.

Then he took a handkerchief from the fellow's pocket, and gagged him with it.

"Now if he should suddenly come to he would be unable to make an outcry," thought Dick.

Then the youth quickly removed the redcoat's uniform.

Then he doffed his own outer clothing and donned the uniform.

Next he bound the sentinel, hand and foot, and lifting him as if he were a child, Dick carried the insensible man back into the timber a distance of a hundred yards, and deposited him against a tree.

"There; he will be all right there, till I get through my work in the British encampment," thought Dick.

He made his way back to where he had surprised and captured the sentinel.

The man's musket lay on the ground where he had dropped it when surprised by Dick.

The youth picked the weapon up and took his place as if he were the sentinel.

Indeed, it was his intention to play the part of a British sentinel till the party of redcoats put in an appearance.

Then he would try to slip into the encampment without attracting attention.

This was his plan, and he carried it out.

Fifteen minutes after he took his stand the party of redcoats, with the wounded man on the litter, put in an appearance; and, as Dick had thought would be the case, their coming aroused considerable excitement.

He waited till a crowd had gathered around the six, and then he slipped out from among the trees and quickly approached and mingled with the crowd.

And, as we have said, it was to Dick that the redcoat spoke when he said, "Jove! I would like to see Dick Slater."

Dick could hardly keep from smiling.

He replied that he would like to see Dick Slater, also.

The redcoat who had recognized Dick in the cabin soon left the crowd and made his way toward the cabin.

"What is he going to the cabin for?" asked Dick of one of the redcoats.

"He is going to report to General Prevost," was the reply.

"Oh, I see."

"He is going to report that the notorious rebel spy, Dick Slater, is in the vicinity."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"Why, I shouldn't think the presence of one person would amount to anything."

"When it is such a person as Dick Slater it amounts to something, I tell you!"

"Why, is he such a terrible fellow?"

"Is he a terrible fellow? Well, I guess he is! There is a reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture."

"You don't mean it?"

"I certainly do."

"Then why don't some of us fellows go out and capture the fellow and earn that five hundred pounds?"

The redcoat laughed.

"Yes, why don't we?" he chuckled. "Because it would

be the hardest money any of us ever earned, that's why. None of the boys are anxious to get rich trying to capture that fellow."

It was rather interesting to Dick to learn in what esteem he was held by his enemies.

He had not realized what a reputation he had worked up before.

Dick had learned something, however.

He had learned that the commander of the British was General Prevost.

Dick had heard of the man.

He had heard of Prevost as being a cruel, vindictive, heartless man, and from what he had seen he judged that the estimate of the British officer was about correct.

Dick wished to play the spy on the British commander, if possible.

Leaving the group of redcoats who were still talking of Dick Slater, the youth sauntered around toward the cabin.

He moved carelessly so as to attract as little attention as possible.

It was far from being the first time Dick had been in a British encampment, playing the part of a redcoat.

He knew exactly how to act and what to do.

He sauntered around till close to the cabin.

He remained here for a few minutes, and then seizing upon a moment when he thought no one was noticing, he slipped around to the rear of the cabin.

He made his way to the door and took up his position there, with his ear against one of the cracks between the slabs of which the door was made.

Dick could hear the voices of the occupants of the cabin, and after listening a few moments was able to distinguish words.

The redcoat who had recognized him was telling his story to General Prevost.

"So that young scoundrel is down here, is he?" the youth heard a surly voice exclaim. "Well, we will have to give him a little attention. He has caused the British more trouble during the past two or three years than a regiment of rebel soldiers."

Dick heard the front door open and the conversation ceased for a few moments.

The youth was just on the point of leaving his position when the door against which he had his ear was suddenly jerked open from within the cabin and Dick felt himself seized by several hands.

At the same instant a score of redcoats rushed around the corner of the cabin and were upon him.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK A PRISONER.

For once in his life Dick was taken wholly by surprise. He had no time to escape. He was seized from within the cabin and attacked from without.

He struggled instinctively, but it was useless. He was outnumbered twenty to one, and had no chance at all.

He realized this after a few moments, and ceased struggling.

"Aha! that is sensible," said a voice, and Dick saw that the speaker was a general, and realized that he was General Prevost.

"You cannot escape, my bold young rebel!" the officer continued, "so the best thing you can do is to take things easy."

"I judge you are right," said Dick, quietly.

"Of course I am right; and now let me have a look at the fellow, men."

There was a very good light in the cabin, and the officer took a good look at Dick, the youth meeting the man's gaze unflinchingly.

"So you are Dick Slater, the great rebel spy, eh?" General Prevost said, after he had completed his survey.

"Who says so?" asked Dick.

"I do!" was the reply, and the redcoat who had recognized Dick in Dan Wilkins' cabin stepped forward and confronted the youth.

There was a look of triumph on the fellow's face.

"You didn't make much by getting away from us, did you?" he said, triumphantly.

"Oh, yes; it was quite a satisfaction to me," replied Dick, coolly.

Dick glanced toward the open doorway and saw it was filled with the faces of curious redcoats.

The word had gone out that the great rebel spy, Dick Slater, had been captured, and all the soldiers wished to get a look at the prisoner.

General Prevost gave the order:

"Bind the prisoner's hands!"

A rope was brought, and Dick's wrists were tied together behind his back.

"Now close the doors!" ordered General Prevost.

The doors were quickly closed.

Then the officer turned toward Dick.

"Where did you get that uniform?" he asked, pointing to Dick's clothes.

"I took it away from one of your men," was the youth's cool reply.

"Took it away from one of my men?"

"Yes."

The face of General Prevost grew dark with anger.

He glared at the youth, fiercely.

"Do you mean that you murdered one of my soldiers and then took his uniform?"

Dick shook his head, while a look of scorn appeared on his handsome face.

"Do I look like a murderer?" he asked.

"No, I can't say that you do; but how else did you secure the uniform?"

"I made a prisoner of your man and then took his uniform."

"Oh! Where is the man now?"

"He is where you will be unable to find him. If I don't tell you where he is he will die of starvation. Give me my liberty and I will give him his."

"Who is the man?"

"He was one of the sentinels."

"Ah! And you overpowered him and carried him away?"

"I did."

"You could not have carried him far."

"Oh, I made him walk."

"You did, eh?"

"Yes; and I concealed him in a spot that you would not be able to find in a month, even if you were to put all your men at work looking."

General Prevost looked long and searchingly at Dick.

Then he said:

"That may be true, and it may not; I am going to try to find him, first, and then if we fail I can negotiate with you afterward."

"Perhaps I may be unwilling to negotiate then."

"There is no danger on that score," with a hard smile.

"A man is always willing to negotiate to save his life."

He turned to his men as if to order them to take Dick away, and then hesitated and turned again toward the youth.

"Why are you down here in this part of the country?" he asked.

Dick smiled.

"Oh, I wanted a change of scene," he replied, carelessly.

General Prevost stamped his foot.

"Don't talk to me in any such fashion as that, young man!" he cried, angrily. "It will do you no good, and may

do you considerable harm; for I am not a man to be trifled with."

"No?"

Dick uttered but the one word, but he said it in such a peculiar tone that the officer was rendered almost wild with rage.

"You insolent young scoundrel!" he cried. "I will prove to you that I am not a man to be trifled with, on the morrow. I shall hold you a prisoner until ten o'clock to-morrow, and then I shall have you hung in the presence of the entire British army."

"That will be terrible, won't it?" exclaimed Dick.

He had taken a great dislike to the British officer, and was glad that he was able to worry him.

"It won't make any difference in fate, anyway," he said to himself; "the scoundrel will hang me, anyway, unless I am so fortunate as to escape."

"Away with him, men!" cried Prevost. "Let him keep company with the other prisoner, and see to it that they do not escape!"

The redcoats seized Dick and hustled him out of the cabin.

The youth was conducted to a point perhaps fifty yards from the cabin.

Here, just within the edge of the timber, with his back to a tree, and to which he was tightly bound, was a man, evidently Ike's father.

The redcoats promptly bound Dick to a tree a short distance from the one the man was bound to, and then to the two men, who were standing guard over the prisoner, they said, through the spokesman:

"Keep close watch of the prisoners. Don't let them escape, on your lives; for if you do, Prevost will hang you!"

"Who is this new fellow?" asked one of the men on guard.

They had not been able to leave their posts to learn who had been captured at the cabin.

"Who is he?" snorted the redcoat, in reply. "Why, he is Dick Slater, the notorious rebel spy!"

"What! You don't mean it?"

The guards were surprised.

"Yes, I do mean it. And, now, I suppose you can see the necessity for keeping a close watch on the prisoners."

"You are right. Well, they won't get away from us."

The redcoats who had brought Dick to the spot now turned and walked away.

The two guards could not see very well, but the light from the camp-fires penetrated sufficiently so they could make out the outlines of Dick's face fairly well, and they looked at the youth with a great deal of interest.

"So you are Dick Slater?" remarked one, presently.

"That is my name," replied Dick, quietly.

"Humph! well, I guess your career is about ended!"

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, Prevost is a bad man to deal with, for one thing. He won't hesitate a minute, but will string you up without ceremony."

"He must be a bad man."

"He is a dangerous man."

"I think he is a brute and a coward!"

"What!"

"That is just what I think."

"Well, you had better not let him hear you say that, young fellow."

"Why not?"

"Why?"

"Yes."

"Well, he would likely change his mind about waiting till to-morrow to hang you, and would have you strung up to a tree right away."

"Oh, that's the kind of a man he is, eh?"

"Yes."

"Which only proves the truth of what I have said regarding him. He is a brute and a coward, else he would not permit his men to burn houses and pillage, as they are doing."

"Oh, that is war, you know."

"I know it is nothing of the kind. It is the work of cowards and brutes, and not of soldiers!"

"Oh, say, you are too free with your talk, altogether!"

"You don't like to hear it, eh?"

"No."

"I suppose it pinches your toes a bit, eh?"

"Perhaps; perhaps not."

"I think it does, and I'm glad of it. The truth may do you some good."

"Bah! you talk too much. Shut up, now!"

"You began it by asking me a question."

"Well, I don't care to hear anything more from you, just the same."

"Oh, very well."

Dick lapsed into silence.

He kept on thinking, however, as may well be supposed.

He realized that he was in great danger.

General Prevost was a brute, and quite capable of ordering Dick hung.

"I really believe that he will keep his word, and that if I am here to-morrow at ten o'clock I will be hanged,"

thought the youth; "it follows, then, that I must escape before that time rolls around."

Dick began figuring on escaping.

He covertly tested his bonds.

The men who had tied his wrists had done a very good job of it, but the youth thought he might be able to free his arms by two or three hours of steady work.

The trouble was that he was bound to the tree, in addition to having his wrists bound.

Still Dick did not despair.

He was not a youth who gave up, no matter how much things seemed to be against him.

He had been in tight places before and escaped.

Why might he not escape again?

He was determined to make an attempt, anyway.

He began working at his bonds.

He suddenly remembered that he had a clasp-knife in his pocket, and if he could get his hands free and secure the knife without being discovered, he could cut the rope which bound him to the tree, and then might succeed in making his escape.

He began working at his bonds.

He pulled and tugged with all his might, though, of course, he had to be careful and not let the guards get an inkling of what he was doing.

If they should discover what he was trying to do it would all be up with him, for they would then keep close watch on him.

He was very careful, and although tugging at his bonds with all his might, managed to sit almost perfectly still, and the guards did not suspect what was going on.

They marched backward and forward across in front of the prisoners, and cast occasional glances at them, but did not make any examination to see if the bonds were intact.

Doubtless they thought there was not the least danger that the two could get their hands free.

Dick cast occasional glances at his fellow-prisoner, but could not see that he was making any effort to free himself.

Dick kept his eyes on the encampment, also, and saw that the redcoats had thrown themselves down for the night.

One, two, three hours passed.

It was drawing near the midnight hour.

Dick felt sure that new guards would be placed over them at midnight.

These new men would be sleepy, on first taking their places, and the youth thought it possible he might succeed in doing something at that time.

He had almost freed his hands.

A few more minutes' work would do it, he was sure.

He decided to wait till the guards were changed and then make the effort to free himself and escape.

At midnight the guards were changed.

As Dick had reasoned, the new men were sleepy.

He was just on the point of making the great effort to free his hands when he saw one of the guards sink to the ground, with a gurgling groan.

The other whirled and received a blow on the head from the butt of a rifle, which stretched him on the ground, senseless.

"What does it mean?" Dick asked himself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE.

He quickly knew.

Dan Wilkins stepped to his side.

The hunter bent over and cut the rope binding Dick, and then Dick leaped to his feet and freed his hands with a strong wrench.

"Free him," whispered Dick, with a nod toward the other prisoner.

Dan stepped to the side of the man and cut his bonds.

Then he motioned to Dick, and started to lead the way through the timber in a direction directly away from the encampment.

At this instant a wild yell went up from one of the guards.

It was the last one struck by Dan.

The blow had been glancing, and had only stunned the fellow temporarily.

As he uttered the yell he scrambled to his feet.

Dan and the two freed prisoners needed no further urging to cause them to get away from the vicinity.

They bounded away at the top of their speed.

They realized that the entire camp would be aroused.

And nearly the entire army would be at their heels in a few moments.

General Prevost would be wild when he learned that Dick Slater had escaped.

He would use every endeavor to recapture the youth.

The yell of the guard did arouse the camp, indeed.

The sleeping men leaped to their feet almost before they were awake.

"What is it?"

"What is the trouble?"

These were the questions the redcoats asked one another.

Then the word, "The prisoners have escaped!" went around, and all was excitement.

There was a rushing to and fro.

General Prevost appeared from out the cabin, wildly excited.

"Twenty pounds to the man or men who capture that rebel spy!" he cried. "Scatter, and re-capture him! Whatever you do, don't let him escape!"

There was a great scurrying about.

The men were eager to earn the twenty pounds.

They set out in chase of the fugitives.

As far as numbers went they should have been able to do something; but in a case of this kind, numbers do not go for a great deal.

The three fugitives were men accustomed to getting through the timber at all hours of the day or night.

They were skilled in the art of woodcraft.

Moreover, they were tough, hardy men, used to hard work and unusual exertions, and could stand the strain of racing through the timber better than their pursuers.

Dan led the way, Dick and Ike's father following.

Dan made a wide detour, and headed back in the direction of his cabin.

Half an hour after leaving the British encampment, with the entire British force, so to speak, at their heels, they arrived at the cabin—and without a single pursuer behind them.

They had run clear away from the redcoats.

Ike was at the cabin.

When he saw his father, alive and free, the boy gave utterance to a glad cry.

"Oh, dad! I'm so glad ter see yo'!" he cried. "An' how glad ma an' Gerty 'll be when they see yo' again!"

"I'm glad ter be free, too, Ike, my boy," said the man.

"Will it be safe to remain here, Dan?" asked Dick.

"Won't the redcoats suspect that you had something to do with our rescue and come here and pay you a visit?"

"I sh'dn't wonder, Dick."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I hardly know."

"Le's all go ter Uncle Lem's, whur ma an' Gerty air," suggested the boy.

"That is a good idee," agreed the boy's father.

"I'm willin'," said Dan.

Then he looked inquiringly at Dick.

"You three can go there," said Dick; "indeed, I think it is the best thing you can do. But as for myself, I have other work to do. I must go and rejoin my company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

"An' then whut'll yo' do?" asked Dan.

"Then we will go ahead of the British and warn the people of the coming of the enemy, and give them a chance to get their stock and other possessions out of the way before the redcoats get to them."

"Thêt is er good plan. Waal, we'd be glad ter hev yo' go with us, but ez yo' idee is ter do good, I won't try ter perswade yo' outer et. Good-by, an' good luck ter yo'."

"Good-by; the same to you," replied Dick.

Then he shook hands with all three and went to the stable and led his horse forth.

The three waited till Dick had mounted, and then with another "good-by, an' good luck!" they disappeared.

Dick rode away through the timber.

He had to ride slowly, as the timber was thick and there was considerable underbrush.

Besides, it was quite dark and he had to go slow to avoid having his head knocked off by limbs of trees.

Presently Dick reached the road and was just on the point of entering it and heading northward toward where he expected to find the "Liberty Boys" awaiting his coming, when he heard voices close at hand.

"The redcoats!" he exclaimed to himself.

He sat motionless in the saddle and waited.

CHAPTER X.

THE REDCOATS AROUSED.

The voices sounded from the north, in the direction Dick had intended going.

He soon decided that the owners of the voices were approaching, for the voices grew louder and plainer.

It was natural that Dick should think the newcomers redcoats.

He knew the British soldiers were out searching for himself and the other escaped prisoner, and it was almost certain that the owners of the voices were redcoats.

Dick listened intently and presently he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Great guns! I believe it is Bob and some of the boys!" was what he said under his breath.

He listened even more eagerly.

"Yes, it is Bob and some of the boys, sure enough!" he decided. "I wonder what they are doing away down here at this time of the night, or, rather, morning?"

It would not take long to find out.

Dick rode forward and hailed the newcomers.

He was careful to call out in a low voice, however.

He did not know but there might be some redcoats within hearing distance.

"Hello! Is that you, Dick?" called out Bob, in accents of relief and joy.

"Yes, it is I, Bob; but be careful. Not so loud."

"What's the trouble—redcoats?" asked Bob, in a subdued voice, as Dick came to a stop in front of the half dozen "Liberty Boys."

"Yes, Bob; I was captured by them and they are searching high and low for me."

"Great guns! is that so?"

"Yes;" and then Dick quickly and briefly told the story of his experiences of the evening.

"What shall we do, Dick?" Bob asked, when Dick had finished.

"We had better get back to camp and then we will start out and put in the rest of the night warning the people along the probable route of the British, and give them a chance to get away in safety before the redcoats put in an appearance."

"All right; back to camp it is, then."

The youths turned their horses' heads in the opposite direction from that in which they had been going, and the little party moved northward, up the road.

Of course, the youths did not know it, but there had been an auditor to their conversation.

One of the redcoats, in searching for Dick and the other escaped prisoner, had wandered more than a mile up the road to the northward.

He had heard the horsemen approaching from the north, and had hidden himself behind a large tree near the roadside.

This was just before Dick appeared on the scene.

A few moments later Dick rode up and came to a halt within two yards of the redcoat.

The hidden redcoat had suspected the identity of Dick, but not knowing who the approaching horsemen might be, he did not dare try to capture the youth—indeed, it is doubtful if he would have dared attempt it, anyway, even if no one had been coming.

He let himself down easy by saying to himself that it was the uncertainty regarding the identity of the coming horsemen that caused him to restrain himself from trying to capture Dick.

He listened to the voices of the newcomers, eagerly.

He wondered who they could be.

Presently he heard Dick say he believed it was Bob and some of the "Liberty Boys," and then he thought he understood matters.

"There are a lot of those 'Liberty Boys' down here in this

part of the country," he said to himself; "well, that is news, and General Prevost will be glad to hear it; for he will go in and kill or capture the whole gang at one stroke!"

This redcoat had heard the entire conversation between Dick and the "Liberty Boys."

As may be supposed, he had listened eagerly.

He remained where he was till the youths rode away, and then he entered the road and sped down it in the opposite direction.

"So there are a lot of those 'Liberty Boys,' and they are in camp up the road aways, are they?" the redcoat said to himself, as he sped along. "Well, I rather think we will be able to give them a scare, at least, before many hours have passed. We will put a stop to their plan of warning the people of our coming."

The redcoat soon reached the British encampment.

The great number of the soldiers who had left in pursuit of Dick and his two comrades an hour or so before had returned, and many were lying down with the intention of getting some sleep, even though the prisoners had escaped and the commander of the army was in a bad humor.

The redcoat hastened to the cabin and knocked on the door.

A gruff voice bade him enter.

It was the voice of General Prevost.

He was sitting before the fire-place, smoking, and glared at the soldier, angrily.

"Well?" he growled.

"I have news for you, sir," cried the soldier; "I have made a discovery!"

And then he quickly told his story.

General Prevost was greatly excited.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when the soldier had finished.

"Good! We will capture that young scoundrel and hang him, yet. And we will kill or capture or run out of the country every one of the youths calling themselves 'Liberty Boys!'"

The British commander leaped to his feet, and summoning an orderly, instructed him to arouse the camp and send the officers to the cabin for instructions.

The officers appeared a few minutes later, and General Prevost told them what he had just been told by the soldier, and ordered them to get ready to take a force and go and capture the "Liberty Boys."

"Whatever you do, don't fail to secure that young scoundrel, Dick Slater!" he said, fiercely. "I am going to hang him, just as sure as my name is Prevost!"

The officers promised to do their best to carry out the orders, and then withdrew to take charge of the force.

It did not take long for the redcoats to get ready.

It had been decided to take five hundred men.

It was thought that this number would be more than sufficient as it was known to General Prevost that there were only about one hundred "Liberty Boys."

The party set out at once.

It marched up the road toward the north.

As it was supposed to be two or three miles to the camp of the "Liberty Boys," no particular care was exercised regarding not making noise.

The party marched onward for perhaps three-quarters of an hour.

It had gone a distance of perhaps two miles.

Then the officer in command sent a couple of men ahead as a scouting expedition.

They returned a few minutes later bringing the information that the "Liberty Boys" were in camp at a point not more than a quarter of a mile distant.

They are getting ready to break camp, though," one of the men said; "and if we don't hurry we won't get a chance at them."

The British officer quickly gave his orders.

He instructed his men to march forward on the double-quick, and to, at the same time, spread out fan-shape, and, if possible, entirely surround the encampment of the "Liberty Boys."

The redcoats set out on the double-quick, as ordered.

They were eager to get a chance at the famous "Liberty Boys."

They had heard so many stories regarding the prowess, the wonderful fighting abilities of the "Liberty Boys," that they were anxious to put the matter to the test and see whether or not the stories they had heard were the truth.

If the redcoats thought to take Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" by surprise, they were soon to learn their mistake.

Dick made it a rule, always, to guard against being taken surprise.

Sentinels were always posted.

It was so on this night.

Sam Sanderson was on guard on the side from which the redcoats were approaching.

He heard the sound of their footsteps, and at once suspected the truth.

Turning, he raced into the encampment.

"The redcoats are upon us, Dick!" he cried. "There must be a strong force of them, and it is my belief that they now we are here and are trying to surround us!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS' " SCARE.

The "Liberty Boys" were about ready to break camp, anyway, so Dick instantly gave the order to mount.

"Ride toward the north at the top of your speed!" he commanded. "Don't stop for anything. If the redcoats get in your way, ride right over them!"

The "Liberty Boys" mounted quickly.

Scarcely had they done so when they heard the redcoats crashing through the underbrush.

"Away with you!" cried Dick. "Keep in the road and don't stop for anything."

The "Liberty Boys" dashed away up the road at a gallop.

Just as the last of the party was leaving the encampment the redcoats put in an appearance.

They fired a volley after the disappearing "Liberty Boys," but did no damage to speak of.

Not a sufficient number of the redcoats had got around on the north side to be able to check the flight of the "Liberty Boys."

The few that were there fired at the youths, but like their comrades did no particular damage.

Onward the "Liberty Boys" rode.

They had been given something of a scare, but that was all it had amounted to.

After a ride of ten or fifteen minutes the youths paused in front of a log house standing beside the road.

Dick leaped to the ground.

Advancing to the door Dick pounded upon it.

There was no reply from within the house.

Dick pounded again.

Then he heard footsteps.

Then the bar was removed.

Next the door opened.

A man stood there.

"Whut d'yo' want?" he asked, suspiciously.

"I wish to warn you," said Dick, "a large force of redcoats are coming up from the southward, and are burning and pillaging right and left."

"Redcoats, d'yo' say, mister?"

"Yes."

"An' they air burnin' an' pillagin'?"

"Yes."

"Whut hev they be'n burnin'?"

"Houses."

"Whut! Yo' don' mean et?"

"Certainly I mean it."

"Gosh! Whut'd they want'er burn houses fur?"

"For sheer deviltry, I suppose. Well, if you wish to save any of your property you had better begin getting ready to get away from here before the redcoats put in an appearance."

"Erbout whut time'll they git heer, d'yo' think?"

"Early in the morning; possibly by nine o'clock."

"Waal, I'm much obleeged ter yo'."

"You are welcome."

Dick now stepped back and mounted his horse.

He sat there for a few moments, in silence.

It was evident that he was thinking.

Presently he came to a decision.

He named five of the youths, and instructed them to ride onward toward the north, one keeping in the road, the other four going to the right and to the left of the road.

They were to rouse the people and warn them of their danger.

"And what are the rest of you going to do?" asked Mark Morrison, who was one of those chosen.

"We are going to remain behind and retard the progress of the British all we can," replied Dick.

"How do you know which way the redcoats are going to go, Dick?"

"I don't know to a certainty, but I have a pretty good idea. I believe the British are headed for Charleston."

The others thought this likely.

Then Mark Morrison and his four comrades rode away on their errand.

"And now, what are we going to do?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"We are going to ride to the top of the hill, half a mile to the northward, and go into camp till morning," replied Dick.

He gave the order to advance.

A few minutes later they were at the top of the hill, and soon they were busy making themselves comfortable for the few hours that remained before morning.

As soon as things were in shape Dick stationed his sentinels.

Then he left the encampment and walked back down the road.

He was soon close to the cabin where they had aroused the man and given him warning.

Dick scarcely knew why he had returned to the cabin.

Somehow, the man had not impressed him favorably when he was talking.

The youth had decided to return and see what the fellow was doing.

He was surprised to note no sign of life about the cabin.

"Well, well! I guess he has gone back to bed," thought Dick. "The presence of an army of redcoats, who are burning and pillaging, does not worry him, seemingly."

Dick stood still and watched the cabin for a few moments.

Then he was on the point of stepping forward and again thumping on the door and giving the man a second warning, when he saw the door open.

It was a fairly dark night, but the cabin stood out in the open and Dick saw the door open quite plainly.

The youth was within the shadows made by the trees and, of course, could not be seen by any one in the cabin.

"I guess the man is going to take advantage of the chance our warning gave him, and get away before the redcoats come, after all," thought Dick.

A few moments later the man stepped through the open doorway and pulled the door shut behind him.

Dick was surprised to see that the man had no bundle nor even a rifle.

The fellow glanced all around and then set out down the road, going in a southerly direction.

Dick was surprised.

He hardly knew what to think.

"Where can the fellow be going?" the youth asked himself.

Dick did not wish to condemn any one unjustly, and he hesitated to allow the thought which came into his mind to remain there.

The man's action was suspicious, however, and there was no getting around this.

"I know what I'll do," thought Dick; "I'll follow him and if he is up to any trick I shall discover the fact."

No sooner thought of than put into effect.

Dick stepped out of the edge of the timber and set out down the road in the wake of the settler.

He walked at quite a good pace, as he wished to keep as close to the man as was safe.

There was a bend in the road fifty yards beyond the cabin, and Dick hastened to round this bend.

He was expected to be able to see or hear the man when he did this, but was disappointed.

He could not make out the outlines of the man's form ahead of him, nor could he, when he paused and listened, hear his footsteps.

"That is strange," murmured Dick, unconsciously speaking in an audible voice. "I wonder where that fellow is."

"He's right heer, young feller!"

CHAPTER XII.

DICK AND THE TORY.

The voice came from behind Dick.

He whirled around instantly.

Not so quick but that he was seized from behind before he succeeded in getting turned clear around, however.

Dick understood the matter instantly.

The man had suspected that he might be followed, and had left the road and concealed himself.

Then he had waited and when Dick paused and made the mark to which he had given utterance, the fellow knew he was being followed, and had leaped upon the youth.

Dick was not the youth to allow himself to be captured in this fashion, however.

He began to struggle.

The man had succeeded in getting the youth at a disadvantage, but Dick thought he would be able to counteract it and come out victorious.

He soon found that the man was very strong, however.

Indeed, he was about the strongest fellow Dick had had hold of in many a day.

It was a terrible struggle.

The settler was as surprised as Dick, however.

He had supposed he would have an easy time disposing of the youth.

But he now realized that he was going to have a very hard time of it—if, indeed, he would be able to succeed at all.

"Who'd a-thort ther young cuss wuz so stout?" he said to himself. "He is ez stout ez er mule, an' ez quick an' active ez er cat!"

Then he redoubled his exertions.

He strained and tugged.

He grunted and worked with all his might.

To no avail.

He could not get the better of the youth with whom he was struggling.

The man panted and perspired.

Growls escaped him as he found all his attempts foiled.

"Cuss yo'!" he grated, "I'll git ther best uv yo' yit!"

"I don't think you will, my friend," was Dick's quiet reply. "It is I who am going to get the better of you."

A feeling of fear began to take hold of the man.

He struggled fiercely.

So far he had been working on the offensive, but now, to his disgust, he found that the youth had broken the hold which he had secured at first and was slowly but surely

getting a hold which would bring his burly opponent into subjection.

The man realized this.

"Ef I don't look out he'll hev me whar I kain't do er thing," he said to himself; "I've gotter git loose an' make er break fur et, fur I mustn't let 'im make er pris'ner uv me."

The man began working on the defensive, now.

He was also on the lookout for a chance to break loose and get away.

He had had quite enough.

All he wished now was to make his escape.

Had he known the youth was such a Tartar he would not have attacked him in the first place.

He had not known it, however, and the result was that he was forced to make the best of a bad situation.

Dick was eager to subdue the man.

He wished to have a talk with him and learn why he had made the attack.

The man did not wish this to take place, and was determined to prevent it if he could.

He suddenly made a desperate effort to break loose.

Dick defeated his object.

"No, you don't, my friend!" he said. "I wish to have a talk with you and cannot let you go just yet."

The man uttered a hoarse growl.

He was too mad to articulate; and, then, he did not know what to say, anyway.

Dick now had the advantage.

He had secured the hold for which he had been working.

He suddenly put forth all his strength.

He caught the fellow with a "cross-buttock," and up into the air went the man's heels, and down he came, flat upon his back with a thud and a grunt of pain.

Instantly Dick was astride the man's body, and had seized the fellow by the throat.

"Now I have you!" he exclaimed, giving a squeeze with his steel-like fingers.

A groan of pain and anger, commingled, escaped the prostrate man.

"How do you like it?"

The man groaned again.

"Don't like it, eh?"

Another groan.

"Oh, perhaps I am squeezing your windpipe so tight you can't talk."

Dick loosed his grip.

"Now, see if you can talk."

"I'll kill yo', one uv these days, yo' young whelp!" growled the man.

"Oh, I guess not."

"Yas, I wull!"

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yas, yo' bet I mean et!"

"And you say you'll kill me one of these days?"

"Thet's whut I'll do!"

"You should have said that you would do so if you were allowed to live."

Dick spoke sternly.

His words and tone seemed to strike terror to the heart of the man.

"Whut d'yo' mean?" the man gasped.

"Just what I said."

"Yo' don' mean thet yo'll kill me!"

"Didn't you say you would kill me?"

"Yas, but——"

"Well, don't you think I would be foolish to let you go when I have you here at my mercy, and can put you out of the way and thus make it impossible for you to do what you threaten?"

"But yo' mustn't—yo' wouldn't darst——"

"Why, man, what is the use of you talking such nonsense? You know very well that these are war times, and that it is all right to put a man out of the way if he threatens to be dangerous."

"But et would be—et would be—murder, an'——"

"Nothing of the kind. It is justifiable; but perhaps if you answer a few questions I may decide to let you off."

"Whut air ther questions?"

"Well, first: Why did you attack me just now?"

"I thort yo' wuz an enemy."

"An enemy, eh?"

"Yas; I thort yo' wuz one uv them thar redcoats whut yo' tol' me erbout."

"Oh, you did?"

Dick's tone implied unbelief.

"Yas, I did."

"Are you sure you are telling the truth?"

"Uv course I am."

"Then why did you say, just now, that you would kill me one of these days? You knew who I was, then, the same as you know now."

"Waal, I—I——"

"Exactly; you don't know what to say. I think you are a liar and a fraud."

"No, I hain't; et wuz all er mistake."

"Oh, it was?"

There was doubt in Dick's tone.

"Yas; I didn't know who yo' wuz till jes' er minnet ergo,

an' then I wuz so mad becos yo' giv' me sech er fall thet sed whut I did without thinkin'."

"That is a pretty good story; and I think that is what it is, too—a story," remarked Dick.

"No, et's ther trooth; I sw'ar et."

"Humph! What is your name?"

"Joe."

"Joe what?"

"Joe Cupp."

"Where were you going, Joe?"

"I wuz goin' down ther road erways."

"What for?"

"I wanted ter see ef yo' hed tole ther trooth erbout thar redcoats."

"Oh, that was it?"

"Yas."

Dick did not believe this.

He made up his mind that this man was a Tory.

He told the fellow as much.

Cupp protested.

He denied that he was a Tory.

"Yo' air mistook, young feller," he said; "I hain't no Tory, nohow yo' kin fix et."

"You are not?"

"No."

"I suppose you are a patriot?"

"Yas, I am."

"Of course, you would say so."

"Et is so, too."

"I don't believe it."

"Yo' don'?"

"No; I believe you are a Tory, and that you were your way to the redcoat encampment to inform thar of the fact that my party was in camp not far from yo' cabin."

"Yo' air wrong, young feller."

"I don't think so; and now the question is, what shud I do with you?"

"Let me go, young feller; I sw'ar thet I hain't no Tory."

But Dick was sure the fellow was lying, and told him

Joe Cupp was lying, but it made him so angry to be told so by the youth that he decided to make one desperate effort to escape.

Dick had taken his hand away from the man's throat and was, in reality, a little bit careless.

He did not think that Cupp had the pluck to try to make any further resistance.

Here was where he made a mistake.

Suddenly the man made a fierce, heaving motion, taking Dick by surprise, succeeded in upsetting him.

Dick started to leap to his feet, but Cupp gave him a fierce kick and upset him again.

Then with a hoarse roar of satisfaction the man leaped to his feet and darted away.

Dick was upon his feet and in chase in a jiffy.

"You cowardly scoundrel!" he cried. "Stop, or I will put a bullet through you!"

The man's reply was to leave the road and dart in among the trees.

Dick followed unhesitatingly.

He did not believe the man would dare try conclusions with him again.

Joe Cupp's main idea, Dick was sure, was to escape.

This was about the truth of the matter.

Still, the man was cunning.

If he could escape and at the same time get his pursuer into trouble, so much the better, he reasoned.

So while running he took good care to run in the direction in which he supposed the redcoats' camp to lie.

In following out this plan he ran almost parallel with the road.

Onward through the timber and underbrush crashed the burly Tory—for such he really was, as Dick suspected.

After him came Dick.

The youth had thought at first that he would be able to speedily overtake the fugitive.

He found that it was a more difficult matter than he had thought it would be.

The man was a good runner.

Dick was overhauling Cupp, true, but it was slowly and gradually.

Closer and closer, slowly but steadily, Dick drew to the fugitive.

Presently Dick was only eight or ten yards behind the man.

"Stop!" called out the youth. "Stop, or I will fire!"

Cupp plunged forward all the faster.

"All right, keep on running if you like, my big friend," said Dick to himself, "I will catch you, just the same."

But he didn't.

Suddenly the fugitive came out into an open space, in which a party of redcoats was encamped.

Cupp seemed to realize that he was among friends.

"Quick!" he yelled. "Heer is er rebel. Ef yo' air quick yo' kin ketch 'im!"

A score of redcoats leaped to their feet, muskets in hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

Dick was so close behind the Tory that it had been impossible for him to stop.

Realizing that he could not do so, Dick decided to continue right onward.

He whipped out a pair of pistols.

Crack! crack!

Dick fired point blank in the faces of the redcoats immediately in front of him.

Two threw up their arms, let their muskets fall, and fell.

With a great bound Dick was through the opening thus made.

Several of the other redcoats attempted to bayonet Dick, but he was too quick, and they only came within an ace of injuring one another.

Onward, like a greyhound, ran Dick.

It was not more than fifty feet to the trees at the farther side of the opening.

If he could reach the shelter of these trees he felt that he would be safe.

When Dick was about halfway across the open space he caught his toe in a root and fell headlong.

It was a lucky accident.

The redcoats had whirled and leveled their muskets, and just as Dick fell they pulled trigger.

Crash! Roar!

The sound was almost deafening.

Dick's fall saved his life.

The bullets whistled through the air at the point where he had been.

They went over him, however, instead of through him.

Dick leaped to his feet and darted onward toward the trees.

Wild yells of triumph which the redcoats had started to give utterance to when Dick went down, changed to yells of anger and disappointment.

They had not killed the "rebel," after all.

They bounded forward in pursuit.

Foremost among them was Joe Cupp.

"Arter 'im!" he yelled. "Don' let ther rebel git erway!"

The redcoats did not intend to let the "rebel" get away if they could help it.

They were angry on account of the wounding of two of their comrades.

Then, too, they hated the "rebels," and wished to make a capture whenever an opportunity presented itself.

So they dashed after Dick at the top of their speed.

They yelled in the hope of frightening the fugitive.

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that this did not have the desired effect.

Dick was a youth who was not easily frightened by anything; and noise had no terrors whatever for him.

Indeed, he was rather glad to hear his pursuers yell, as he was well aware that it necessitated the expenditure of considerable wind and would make the owners of the voices give out just so much quicker.

Dick reached the timber and disappeared within its protecting shades.

After him came the redcoats.

Having lost sight of him, and fearing their intended victim might escape them, the redcoats drew pistols and fired a volley.

They fired by guess and without any real expectation that they would hit the fugitive.

They simply hoped that they might bring the "rebel" down.

But although doubtless a number of trees suffered, Dick was not injured.

He kept on running.

Fearing that his pursuers might fire another volley and accidentally hit him, Dick turned to the left and ran in a direction which led him toward the road.

Dick soon reached the road.

He was on the point of entering the road and continuing along it when he saw a body of men approaching.

"Great guns!" thought Dick, "I am in for it now."

He paused a moment and stood irresolute.

He heard the redcoats who had been pursuing him, and who had gone on straight ahead, and had consequently lost track of him temporarily, stop and begin calling out to one another.

"They will be coming this way in a few moments," thought Dick, "and here are these fellows right in front. What shall I do?"

He did not stand there long.

Dick was not one of the kind who ever remained inactive long when there was work to be done.

He turned and darted back into the timber.

He kept just within the edge and ran toward the north.

He thought it possible that he might be able to slip past the encampment he had just stumbled upon, and kept onward at good speed.

He was soon back, close to the camp.

He found that there were a number of redcoats there and that they were moving about, here and there, and that some of them were in the road.

Then Dick heard the voices of the men who had been pursuing him.

They were coming toward him, so he judged from the sound of the voices.

Dick realized that he was practically surrounded.

What should he do?

He paused and stood still, pondering the situation.

He took a couple of steps forward and encountered an obstacle.

The obstacle in question was a good-sized log.

Dick had run against the end of the log and in feeling about in the darkness made a discovery.

The log was hollow.

A thought struck Dick.

Might he not be able to escape from his enemies hiding in the hollow log?

Dick could hear voices on all sides of him.

There was no doubt about it; he was surrounded by the redcoats.

He might be able to slip through and make his escape and then again he might not.

It would certainly be a difficult matter to get through the lines of the British.

Dick decided that it would be safest and best to conceal himself in the hollow log.

It might be that by so doing he would be able to get away from the redcoats.

There was no time to spare.

The voices were coming closer and closer.

Some of the redcoats might happen upon them at any moment.

Dick gave a quick glance around him and then stooping crawled into the hollow log.

Dick was glad to find that the log was hollow, quite a considerable distance.

He crawled back as far as he could go.

He drew up his legs all he could, and lay there, snug as a bug in a rug.

The sound of the voices became plainer and plainer.

The redcoats were close at hand.

Soon Dick could understand what was said.

"Where do you suppose the fellow went?" Dick heard one of the men say.

"I don't know," replied another; "he's a slippery rascal. I must say."

"He certainly is; I thought we had him, didn't you?"

"Yes; I didn't see how he could get away."

"Well, I guess he has."

"Hello! What's this?"

Thump, thump!

One of the redcoats had thumped the log with the butt of his musket.

"It's a log."

"Yes, and a hollow one, too, judging by the sound."

Thump, thump!

"You are right," agreed the redcoat who was doing the thumping; "the log must be hollow."

"Maybe the rebel is in there," suggested the other.

Dick heard every word the redcoats uttered, and a cold chill went up his spine.

"Jove! I'm afraid I'm in for it," he said to himself, in dismay. "I'm as helpless here as a rat in a trap. I'm afraid I made a mistake in taking refuge here."

"Let's make an examination," said the other redcoat, in reply to his comrade's remark. "If he is in the log we'll quickly have him out."

Dick heard the two redcoats make their way to the end of the log.

It was lucky for the youth that at that time matches had not been invented.

Had the redcoats had a few matches in their pockets they would have quickly discovered Dick.

But they had nothing of the kind, so had to make their examination by feeling inside the hollow log.

One reached in as far as he could and felt around, but he was unable to reach Dick, so did not discover the youth's presence.

"There's no one here," the redcoat said.

"Are you sure?" asked the other.

"Yes."

"How far in did you reach?"

"Oh, three or four feet."

"Maybe he's farther in than that; crawl in and see."

"Crawl in, you say—and get snake bitten? Not I! If there's any crawling to be done, you'll do it yourself."

But the other wasn't eager to venture, either.

"Jove! I never thought of the snakes; you'll have to excuse me. I don't believe he's in there, anyway."

"Neither do I."

Dick was glad to hear them say this.

He had almost given himself up for lost.

Now, however, he began to think that there was a chance that he would escape discovery, after all.

The next words of the redcoat caused a cold chill to traverse Dick's spinal column, however.

"Stand out of the way," the redcoat said to his comrade. "I'll poke my musket into the opening, and if the rebel is there I'll spit him on the point of my bayonet!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PRODDED BY A BAYONET.

As we have said, the words of the redcoat filled Dick with a feeling of horror.

The idea of having a bayonet-point prodding around in the vicinity of one's person was not pleasant, to say the least.

One thing Dick was glad of, and that was that he had crawled into the log headfirst.

That made his head and body farthest from the redcoat, and would make him less liable to sustain serious injury from the bayonet thrust.

Still, it would not be a pleasant thing to have a bayonet run through one's leg.

Dick would have to take the chances, however.

He had no intention of announcing his presence to prevent the redcoat from carrying his plan into effect.

Dick drew his legs up as far as he could and waited.

He heard a scraping noise at the end of the log, and realized that the redcoat was pushing his musket into the opening.

Dick held his breath and waited anxiously.

Presently he felt something touch his leg.

By moving the limb quickly Dick managed to keep it from being pierced by the point of the bayonet.

He felt the weapon sliding on up alongside his leg, and it was almost to his hip when the motion suddenly ceased.

"Some one is calling you, George," he heard one of the redcoats say.

"Sure?" asked the other.

This was the one with the musket, Dick knew, for he ceased pushing the weapon and stood still, evidently listening.

A sudden thought came to Dick.

Reaching around he took hold of the bayonet and gave it a peculiar twist, loosening it from the end of the musket.

"What was that?" exclaimed the redcoat.

"Some one calling you, I said," was the reply.

"I don't mean that. Something gave my musket a jerk."

The other laughed.

"Likely it was the rebel, George," he said.

"Don't make sport. I mean what I say."

"Oh, you imagined it."

"I didn't do anything of the kind."

"You are excited, George."

"Bah! Well, I guess I might as well go and see what the captain wants."

Dick felt the musket being drawn back out from underneath his limb.

The bayonet, however, much to his satisfaction, remained in his hand.

Dick had risked discovery by loosening the bayonet from the end of the musket, but he was glad to know that the dangerous weapon was no longer where it could do him damage.

Dick hoped the redcoat would not discover that his bayonet was missing.

In that case Dick would have an opportunity to escape.

If, however, he should discover the bayonet was gone, and try to recover it, Dick might be discovered, after all.

Dick listened, breathlessly, to hear what was said by the redcoat.

The man's first words reassured him.

"Come along, Mark," was what the man said, "let's go back to camp."

"All right, George," was the reply.

Then Dick heard the trampling of the feet of the two as they walked away.

Dick at once began figuring on getting out of the log. He did not like his quarters.

He was too helpless.

He had had one experience such as he had never expected to have, and it was quite enough for him.

He did not wish to have any more such.

Dick felt that it would be absolute enjoyment to have the privilege of fighting for his life out in the open as compared with being forced to lie there in the hollow log and take whatever his enemies were a mind to give him without being able to strike a blow in return.

He decided to get out as quickly as possible.

He at once began working his way toward the open end of the log.

He had almost reached it when he heard an exclamation from one of the two redcoats, who were now forty or fifty feet distant.

"Jove! Mark, the bayonet is gone off my musket!" was the exclamation the redcoat gave utterance to.

"I'll have to hurry, now," thought Dick.

He hastened his work of getting out.

His idea was that the redcoats would return, and if he was not out of the log he would be discovered.

Dick succeeded in getting out while yet the two were thirty feet distant.

He tossed the bayonet as far back into the hollow tree as he could.

Then he stole softly away.

He went but a short distance—perhaps fifteen yards.

He did not dare go farther as he could hear redcoats moving about, and feared he might run upon some of them.

He leaned against a tree and stood there, waiting a moment.

He heard the redcoats, George and Mark, reach the log.

"The bayonet surely must be in there," he heard George say, "but I must say that I don't like the idea of crawling in there after it."

"Still thinking of the snakes, eh?" laughed Mark.

"Yes."

"Well, I'll tell you what to do; poke the muzzle of your musket around in there. Perhaps you will be able to draw the bayonet out in that manner."

"That's a good idea; I'll try it."

The redcoat poked around in the hollow tree with his musket.

Presently there was a metallic clink.

"There it is!" the owner of the musket exclaimed. "I'll have it in a jiffy."

It was but the work of a few moments to secure the bayonet.

The redcoat quickly fastened the bayonet onto the end of the musket.

"I don't see how it happened to come off," he remarked. "I was sure I had it fastened on tightly."

"You probably twisted it in poking it around in there and thus loosened it," said his companion.

"Probably you are right."

"Well, let's get back to camp."

Dick heard the two move away.

At the same time he heard some more redcoats approaching from the opposite direction.

There seemed to be quite a number of them and they were scattered out in such fashion that it would be a difficult matter for Dick to get through their line without being detected.

What should he do?

Dick did not like the idea, but he decided to again seek refuge in the hollow log.

Having so decided, he moved forward quickly and noiselessly as possible.

He was soon at the end of the hollow log.

Stooping, he crawled into the opening, headfirst, to the log.

"Another redcoat might take a notion to poke his musket in here," thought Dick, "and I would rather have my head punctured with a bayonet than my head."

Dick was soon as far up into the hollow log as it was possible to go.

Then he lay still and listened.

He heard the redcoats coming nearer and nearer.

Presently they were right at the log.

Indeed, two or three of them stumbled against it.

"Hello! What's this?" exclaimed one.

"A log," laughed another.

"Good! It will make a good seat; let's rest a minute, fellows."

There was considerable thumping and scraping, and the shock and quivered.

Dick understood that the redcoats were climbing up on top of it.

The youth was not very well pleased over having the redcoats come to a stop in such close proximity, but he could not help himself.

All he could do was to lie there and take things as easy as possible.

The redcoats began talking of the work upon which they had just been engaged.

"I must say," remarked one, "that that rebel is about the most slippery fellow I ever ran across."

"That's right," agreed another; "I would not have thought it possible he could escape."

"Nor I," from still another; "we had him completely surrounded."

"Well, you see, it's this way," remarked a fourth: "The majority of those fellows have lived in a timbered region all their lives and are as much at home there as are the wildcats and other wild animals; they know exactly how and where to conceal themselves, while we don't know much about timber."

The others coincided with this.

Dick wished the redcoats would get through and go away.

He did not fancy his situation.

At last Dick's wish was gratified.

The redcoats became rested and having exhausted the subject of Dick's wonderful escape, leaped down off the log and made their way in the direction of the encampment.

Dick drew a long breath of relief.

"I'm glad they are gone," he said to himself; "this isn't the most comfortable position in the world, and I shall be glad to get out where I can stretch my legs."

Dick did not wait very long.

As soon as the redcoats were safely out of the way the youth worked his way out of the log.

He raised up and standing erect, listened intently.

The only redcoats he could hear were those who had just

been sitting on the log, and they were quite a distance away and getting farther away every moment.

Dick drew a breath of relief.

"I guess I'm all right now," he murmured.

"Not much yo' hain't!" cried a hoarse voice, and then Dick felt himself seized from behind.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK RECOGNIZES AN OLD ENEMY.

Dick recognized the voice.

It was that of the Tory, Joe Cupp.

Dick was not only surprised, but for once in his life was angry as well.

It was this man who had caused him the trouble in the first place, and now to have him put in an appearance again, just when Dick thought he was safe and would easily succeed in escaping, was exasperating.

Dick began struggling, with all his might.

Exercising his strength to the utmost he attempted to break the Tory's hold.

He could not do it, however.

Cupp had leaped upon Dick from behind and had thrown his arms around the youth, this pinioning his arms to his side.

Finding that he could not free his arms, Dick suddenly tried another trick.

He bent forward, quickly, at the same time humping up his back.

Dick was very strong and had no difficulty in lifting the Tory.

Cupp hung on to Dick, tenaciously, and this proved to be his undoing.

He was lifted clear of the ground.

Up into the air went his heels.

Dick gave a peculiar jerk to his body.

Too late, Joe Cupp realized that he had made a mistake in retaining his hold around Dick's body.

As his heels went up into the air he instinctively relaxed his hold in the hope that he would be able to save himself and drop back onto his feet.

He was too late, however.

He had gone too far.

The result was that instead of dropping back onto his feet, he shot on forward over Dick's head.

The gigantic body of Joe Cupp turned a somersault in

the air and he struck across the top of the log and was almost broken in two.

A loud howl of pain and rage went up from the fellow.

"Oh, I'm killed!" he yelled. "My back's broke! Help! Murder! Ther rebel's here, fellers! Hurry an' yo'll ketch 'im!"

Cupps rolled off the log onto the ground where he kicked and floundered around and kept up a terrible howling.

"It would serve you right if your back is broken!" cried Dick as he darted away.

"I don't think it is, however," he added to himself; "if it was, he couldn't make as much noise as he is making."

Dick hastened away.

He knew that the redcoats would be on the scene in a very few moments.

Indeed, he heard sounds of commotion in the direction of the encampment, already.

Dick hastened onward in the direction of the road.

By the time he reached it quite a number of the redcoats had arrived at the spot where the Tory was.

Joe Cupp had managed to get up on his feet.

This had caused him considerable pain as his back had been strained by the fall, but the Tory was delighted to find that his back was not broken, and managed to stop groaning long enough to explain matters to the redcoats.

When the latter learned that the "rebel" was so close at hand, they uttered exclamations and immediately began searching for him.

Dick thought he had a chance to escape now, and he was not slow to make the best of the opportunity.

The instant he was in the road he darted away at the top of his speed.

Onward he ran.

He heard the shouts of the redcoats in the road behind him.

If the redcoats gave pursuit, however, they did not run as fast as Dick.

At any rate, they did not get close enough to him to cause him any worry.

He continued onward at his best speed and soon was out of hearing of his enemies.

Feeling sure that he was safe now, Dick slackened his speed to a trot and later on to a walk.

Half an hour later he reached the encampment of the "Liberty Boys."

He found them all wide awake and anxious.

"You have given us a good scare, Dick," said Bob; "we did not know what had become of you. We were afraid the redcoats had captured you."

"They did come within an ace of it, Bob," replied Dick;

"but a miss is as good as a mile, yo'u know, and here I am again, safe and sound."

"Well, we're glad to see you back. What was going down there a while ago, anyway? We heard some firing."

Dick told the story of his adventures with the Tory, Cupp, and of his narrow escape from being punctured by the redcoat's bayonet while concealed in the hollow log.

As may be supposed, the "Liberty Boys" listened with interest.

"Say, you were in luck to get out of that scrape, Dick," said Bob.

The other youths said the same.

"I think so, myself," agreed Dick.

"You wouldn't have had any trouble if it hadn't been for that Tory," remarked one of the "Liberty Boys."

"That's right," said Bob; "lots of those Tories are worth even than the redcoats."

The "Liberty Boys" lay down, presently, and snatched a little sleep.

They were up early next morning, however, and they put in the day worrying the British to the best of their ability.

They kept retreating as the redcoats advanced, but would pause at the top of every hill and fire upon the British when they came within range.

Then when the redcoats would charge forward, the "Liberty Boys" would mount their horses and gallop away out of danger.

The "Liberty Boys" kept up these tactics for three days.

They harassed the British so much as to retard their progress considerably.

The redcoats were forced to advance slowly and cautiously.

It soon got so that the men in the front ranks of the British force would look at one another dubiously when they saw a hill ahead of them, and the word would go around:

"Now look out for those confounded rebels, fellows!"

It was rarely that they were disappointed in their expectations.

Usually the "rebels" were there and would succeed in firing two or three volleys before being forced to retreat.

Another thing the redcoats very quickly discovered, that was that the little band of patriots were warning the people of the approach of the British army.

The houses along the road were, without exception, tenanted and in the majority of cases all the stock had been driven away.

As a result the British soldiers actually suffered from hunger.

They had hard work getting enough to eat to keep them with strength sufficient so that they could continue the march.

Out of revenge the redcoats burned all the houses and did as much damage as they could.

Many and dire were the threats they gave utterance to regarding what they would do to the "rebels" if they should succeed in getting hold of any of them.

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" took care that this should not occur, however.

It was no part of their plans to allow any of their number to fall into the hands of the British.

On the evening of the third day the "Liberty Boys" crossed the Edisto River at what was known as the Stone Ferry.

The ferryman, Dick quickly learned, was a Tory.

The fellow did not say much, but the youth could see that he was doing considerable thinking.

There was a sullen look on his face.

Then, too, Dick thought the fellow eyed him in a peculiar manner.

"It would almost look as if he thought he knew me," would Dick to himself.

This caused the youth to look more closely at the ferryman than he otherwise would have done.

Dick was puzzled.

Somehow he became imbued with the belief that he had seen the man before.

He tried to remember where he had seen the fellow, but could not.

He spoke to Bob on the quiet, and Bob took a good look at the ferryman.

He, too, said he believed he had seen the man before, like Dick, he could not remember where.

Finally they dismissed the matter from their minds.

It was almost sundown when the last load of "Liberty Boys" had been ferried across.

It had been slow work on account of the fact that the men had to swim behind the boat.

"I don't think we got across the river much too soon," said Mark Morrison; "the British were not more than five miles behind us, and they must be pretty close to the shore by this time."

"That's so," agreed Sam Sanderson.

Dick and Bob were standing, looking back across the river.

The ferryman had just reached the opposite shore and stepped out of the ferryboat when an exclamation escaped him.

"I know him now, Bob!" he cried, in excitement. "I know who that man is."

"Do you?" inquired Bob, somewhat eagerly. "Who is he?"

"Do you remember, Bob, that my father was murdered by a gang of Tories in the summer of seventy-six, in front of our home?"

Bob nodded.

"Yes, Dick, I remember it only too well—and how you put the entire gang to flight."

This had been the case.

When the Tories shot Mr. Slater down, Dick, who was in his eighteenth year at the time, ran into the house, grabbed his father's rifle, ran back out to the road and shot the leader of the Tories, one Hank Scroggs, mortally wounding him, and then had attacked the rest of the gang with the clubbed rifle and put them to flight.

"Well, Bob," said Dick, a grim look on his face, "that man over yonder was a member of that gang, and he is no other than Joe Bilkins. Don't you remember him?"

Bob started.

"Yes, I remember him, Dick; and now that you mention it, I know that you are right. The ferryman is Joe Bilkins, sure as you live! I wonder what he is doing away down here in South Carolina?"

"I don't know, Bob. He left the neighborhood soon after they killed father, and I suppose he drifted down here."

"I suppose so."

Dick's air was one of pre-occupation.

He gazed about him.

Suddenly his face lighted up.

"Come, Bob!" he exclaimed.

"Where are you going, Dick?"

Dick had darted toward the river bank.

"I am going to cross the river and make a prisoner of Joe Bilkins, Bob. I am going to make him suffer a bit for being a member of the party that murdered my father. Several shots were fired, and he may have been one who did some of the shooting. I won't kill him, but I wish to give him a good scare."

"I'm with you, old man!"

The two hastened down to the water's edge.

A boat lay there.

It was this that had attracted Dick's attention.

He leaped into the boat.

Bob followed suit.

Dick seized the oars.

Bob pushed off.

Dick began rowing with lusty strokes.

He headed straight for the ferry landing.

The ferryman saw them coming.

He made no attempt to get away.

Instead he stood his ground, boldly.

"I guess he thinks we haven't recognized him, Dick," said Bob; "he is standing his ground, watching us."

Bob sat in the stern, facing toward the farther shore, so could see the ferryman plainly.

Indeed, as the boat drew near to the shore, Bob fancied he could discern a sneering smile on the ferryman's face.

The bow of the boat grated on the sand a few moments later, and Dick and Bob leaped ashore and advanced toward the man.

"I know you, Joe Bilkins!" cried Dick, when within a few yards of the man. "You helped murder my father, and now I am going to make you suffer for it. You are my prisoner!"

Even then the man did not seem to be alarmed.

The sneering smile did not leave his face.

"So ye think I'm yer pris'ner, do ye?" he cried, as Dick and Bob paused.

"Yes, you are my prisoner!" cried Dick. "Get into the boat, yonder. I am going to take you back with me!"

"Wait!" said Bilkins.

Then he waved his hand.

As he did so a British officer and several soldiers rushed forward from behind the ferryman's cabin and confronted Dick and Bob.

A sneering laugh escaped the lips of Joe Bilkins.

He pointed to Dick and Bob.

"These youths are Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, two of the rankest rebels in the country!" cried the Tory.

"You are our prisoners!" cried the British officer.

But the redcoats did not know with whom they were dealing.

Had they been aware of the capabilities of the two youths they would have been more careful to have them covered by weapons.

The youths saw they had a chance to escape by making a daring attack.

Instantly they whipped out their pistols and fired, point-blank, at the redcoats.

The attack was so sudden that it took the redcoats entirely by surprise.

Two of the redcoats fell.

Again Dick and Bob whipped out pistols and again they fired.

Another of the redcoats went down, and, with a yell of pain, the Tory also fell.

Dick had aimed his shot at Bilkins.

Only the British officer and one soldier remained standing, and they seemed dazed.

Dick and Bob made good use of their opportunity, and leaping forward, they dealt the two men severe blows on the head with the butts of their pistols.

The redcoats dropped in their tracks.

"Quick! To the boat, Bob!" cried Dick. "Yonder come the entire force of redcoats!"

He was right about this.

The British had emerged from the timber a quarter of a mile distant and were advancing on the double-quick.

Turning, the youths ran rapidly to where the boat lay and, shoving it into the water, leaped in.

Dick seized the oars and began rowing with all his might.

The British, realizing that something unusual had taken place, hastened forward with all possible speed and arrived upon the scene just as the officer and soldier, who had been knocked down by the blows from the butts of Dick's and Bob's pistol, rose to their feet.

The officer was angry and excited.

Three of his men had been shot down and he himself and another of his men had been knocked down by the youths in the boat, and he was eager to get revenge.

"Shoot them!" he roared, pointing toward Dick and Bob. "Don't let those scoundrels escape! Fire, men! Fire!"

The redcoats quickly took aim and fired a volley.

The distance was too great, however, and the bullets fell short.

Seeing this, the officer rushed down to the ferryboat calling upon the soldiers to follow as he did so.

"Come on!" he cried, "we will cross the river and catch them yet!"

Joe Bilkins, the Tory, had been only slightly wounded by Dick's bullet, and had struggled to his feet.

He hastened down to the landing.

"Ye don't want'er cross ther river!" he cried. "Thar's hundred uv them fellers over thar, an' they'll riddle ye th bullets. Ye had better go slow an' take et easy."

The officer was wild with rage and eager to get revenge on Dick and Bob, but he realized that it would be fool-
dy for fifteen or twenty of them to go across and get
thin range of a hundred muskets, so he reluctantly
andoned the idea of pursuing the youths.

General Prevost rode up at this juncture and took com-
and.

When he heard the details of what had just occurred, he
s very angry; but realized that it would be best to let
matter rest for the present.

He made up his mind, however, that if ever he got a
nce at Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys," he would
ke them suffer for all the trouble they had caused him.

Dick and Bob reached the other shore in safety and
oined their comrades.

They were congratulated upon their escape.

The youths themselves realized that their escape had
n a very narrow one.

"They came very near getting us," said Dick, "but a
miss is as good as a mile, and we will keep right on
worrying General Prevost and his army of marauding red-
coats, and make them all the trouble possible."

"That we will!" agreed Bob. "We will give them cause
to remember their march from Savannah to Charleston!"

"You are right, Bob; they have given us a scare or two,
but I think we have more than evened up the score—or,
if we haven't, we will do so before they reach Charleston."

THE END.

The next number (53) of "The Liberty Boys of '76"
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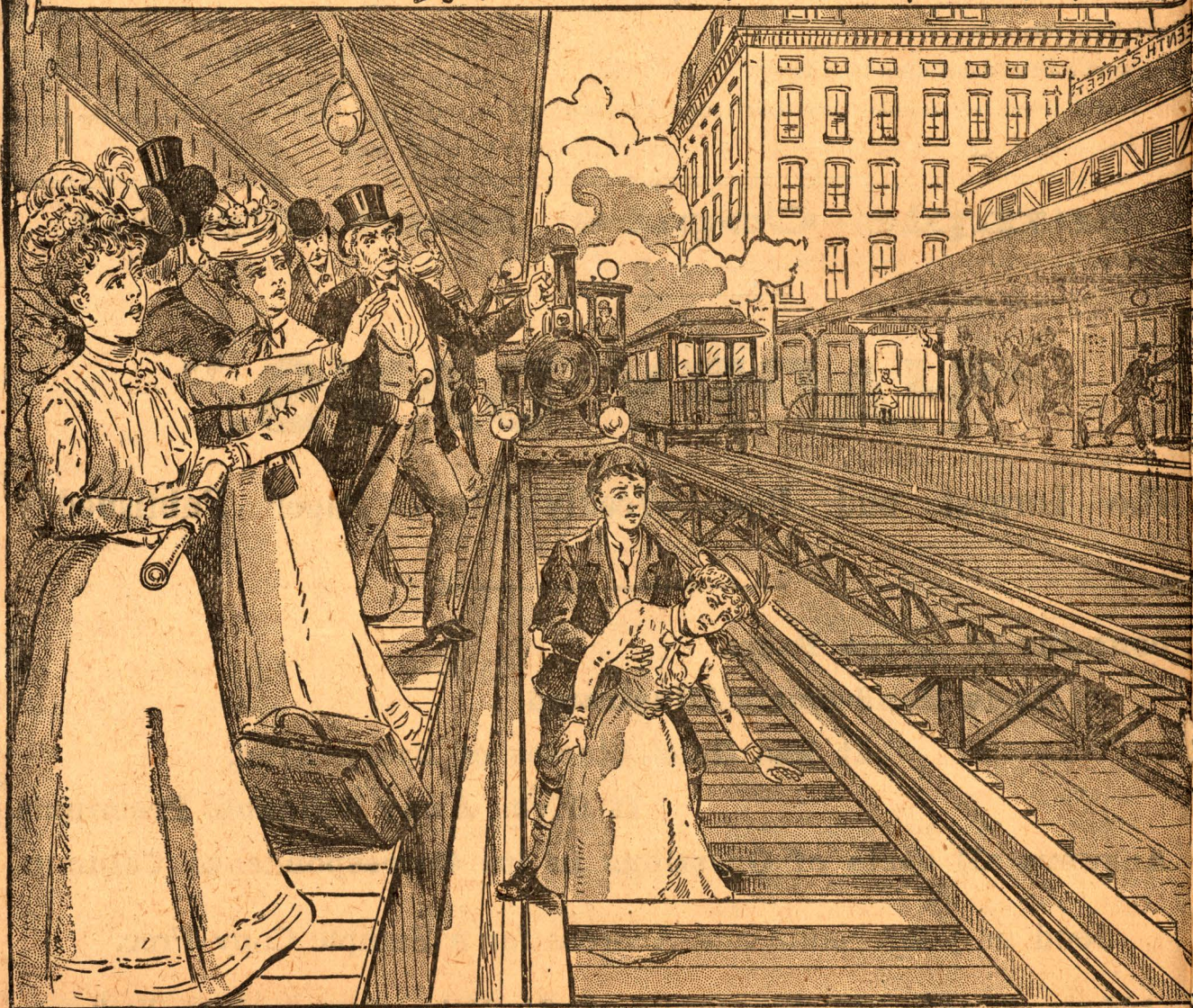
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